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Elon Musk

Elon Reeve Musk (/ˈiːlɒn mʌsk/; born June 28, 1971) is a businessman and U.S. special government employee, best known for his key roles in Tesla, Inc., SpaceX, and the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), and his ownership of Twitter. Musk is the wealthiest individual in the world; as of February 2025, *Forbes* estimates his net worth to be US$397 billion.

Musk was born to an affluent South African family in Pretoria before immigrating to Canada, acquiring its citizenship from his mother. He moved to California in 1995 to attend Stanford University, and with his brother Kimbal co-founded the software company Zip2, that was later acquired by Compaq in 1999. That same year, Musk co-founded X.com, a direct bank, that later formed PayPal. In 2002, Musk acquired U.S. citizenship, and eBay acquired PayPal. Using the money he made from the sale, Musk founded SpaceX, a spaceflight services company, in 2002. In 2004, Musk was an early investor in electric vehicle manufacturer Tesla and became its chairman and later CEO. In 2018, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) sued Musk for fraud, alleging he falsely announced that he had secured funding for a private takeover of Tesla; he stepped down as chairman and paid a fine. Musk was named *Time* magazine's Person of the Year in 2021. In 2022, he acquired Twitter, and rebranded the service as X the following year. In January 2025, he was appointed head of Trump's newly created DOGE.

His political activities and views have made him a polarizing figure. He has been criticized for making unscientific and misleading statements, including COVID-19 misinformation, affirming antisemitic and transphobic comments, and promoting conspiracy theories. His acquisition of Twitter was controversial due to a subsequent increase in hate speech and the spread of misinformation on the

Elon Musk
FRS

Musk in 2018

Born	Elon Reeve Musk June 28, 1971 Pretoria, Transvaal, South Africa
Citizenship	South Africa Canada (from 1989) United States (from 2002)
Education	University of Pennsylvania (BA, BS)
Occupations	CEO and product architect of Tesla, Inc. Founder, CEO, and chief engineer of SpaceX Owner, CTO and executive chairman of X (formerly Twitter) Founder of the Boring Company, X Corp., and xAI Co-founder of Neuralink, OpenAI, Zip2, and X.com (part of PayPal) President of the Musk Foundation

service. Musk has engaged in political activities in several countries, including as a vocal and financial supporter of U.S. president Donald Trump. He was the largest donor in the 2024 United States presidential election, and is a supporter of far-right activists, causes, and political parties.

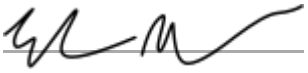
	Head of Department of Government Efficiency temporary organization
Spouses	Justine Wilson (m. 2000; div. 2008) Talulah Riley (m. 2010; div. 2012) (m. 2013; div. 2016)
Children	12[1]
Parents	Maye Musk Errol Musk
Relatives	Musk family
Awards	Full list

Elon Musk's voice

0:00 / 0:00

Elon Musk speaking about India and his meeting with its prime minister, Narendra Modi
Recorded June 20, 2023

Signature



Early life

Elon Reeve Musk was born on June 28, 1971, in Pretoria, South Africa's administrative capital.[2][3] He is of British and Pennsylvania Dutch ancestry.[4][5] His mother, Maye (née Haldeman), is a model and dietitian born in Saskatchewan, Canada, and raised in South Africa.[6][7][8][a] His father, Errol Musk, is a South African electromechanical engineer, pilot, sailor, consultant, emerald dealer, and property developer, who partly owned a rental lodge at Timbavati Private Nature Reserve.[14][15][16][17] Elon has a younger brother, Kimbal, a younger sister, Tosca, as well as four paternal half-siblings.[18][19][8][20] Musk was raised in the Anglican Church, in which he was baptized.[21][22]

The Musk family was wealthy during Elon's youth.[17] Despite both Elon and Errol previously stating that Errol was a part owner of a Zambian emerald mine,[17] in 2023, Errol recounted that the deal he made was to receive "a portion of the emeralds produced at three small mines".[23][24] Errol was elected to the Pretoria City Council as a representative of the anti-apartheid Progressive Party and has said that his children shared their father's dislike of apartheid.[2]

After his parents divorced in 1980, Elon chose to live primarily with his father.[4][14] Elon later regretted his decision and became estranged from his father.[25] Elon has recounted trips to a wilderness school that he described as a "paramilitary *Lord of the Flies*" where "bullying was a virtue" and children were encouraged to fight over rations.[26] In one incident, after an altercation with a fellow pupil, Elon was thrown down concrete steps and beaten severely, leading to him being hospitalized for his injuries.[27] Elon described his father berating him after he was discharged from the hospital.[27] Errol denied berating Elon and claimed, "The boy had just lost his father to suicide and Elon had called him stupid. Elon had a tendency to call people stupid. How could I possibly blame that child?"[28]

Elon was an enthusiastic reader of books, and had attributed his success in part to having read *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Foundation* series, and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.[16][29] At age ten, he developed an interest in computing and video games, teaching himself how to program from the VIC-20 user manual.[30] At age twelve, Elon sold his BASIC-based game *Blastar* to *PC and Office Technology* magazine for approximately $500.[31][32]

Education

Musk graduated from Pretoria Boys High School in South Africa.

Musk attended Waterkloof House Preparatory School, Bryanston High School, and then Pretoria Boys High School, where he graduated.[33] Musk was a good but unexceptional student, earning a 61 in Afrikaans and a B on his senior math certification.[34] Musk applied for a Canadian passport through his Canadian-born mother to avoid South Africa's mandatory military service,[35][36] which would have forced him to participate in the apartheid regime,[2] as well as to ease his path to immigration to the United States.[37] While waiting for his application to be processed, he attended the University of Pretoria for five months.[38]

Musk arrived in Canada in June 1989, connected with a second cousin in Saskatchewan,[39] and worked odd jobs including at a farm and a lumber mill.[40] In 1990, he entered Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.[41][42] Two years later, he transferred to the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied until 1995.[43] Although Musk has said that he earned his degrees in 1995, the University of Pennsylvania did not award them until 1997 – a Bachelor of Arts in physics and a Bachelor of Science in economics from the university's Wharton School.[44][45][46][47][48] He reportedly hosted large, ticketed house parties to help pay for tuition, and wrote a business plan for an electronic book-scanning service similar to Google Books.[49]

In 1994, Musk held two internships in Silicon Valley: one at energy storage startup Pinnacle Research Institute, which investigated electrolytic supercapacitors for energy storage, and another at Palo Alto–based startup Rocket Science Games.[50][51] In 1995, he was accepted to a graduate program in materials science at Stanford University, but did not enroll.[46][44][52] Musk decided to join the Internet boom, applying for a job at Netscape, to which he reportedly never received a response.[53][35] *The Washington Post* reported that Musk lacked legal authorization to remain and work in the United States after failing to enroll at Stanford.[52] In response, Musk said he was allowed to work at that time and that his student visa transitioned to an H1-B. According to numerous former business associates and shareholders, Musk said he was on a student visa at the time.[54]

Business career

Zip2

In 1995, Musk, his brother Kimbal, and Greg Kouri founded web software company Zip2 with funds borrowed from Musk's father.[55][25] They housed the venture at a small rented office in Palo Alto.[56] The company developed and marketed an Internet city guide for the newspaper publishing industry, with maps, directions, and yellow pages.[57]

According to Musk, "The website was up during the day and I was coding it at night, seven days a week, all the time."[56] The Musk brothers obtained contracts with *The New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*,[58] and persuaded the board of directors to abandon plans for a merger with CitySearch.[59]

Musk's attempts to become CEO were thwarted by the board.[60] Compaq acquired Zip2 for $307 million in cash in February 1999,[61][62] and Musk received $22 million for his 7-percent share.[63]

External videos

Musk speaks of his early business experience during a 2014 commencement speech at University of Southern California (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7Qh-vwpYH8) on YouTube

X.com and PayPal

In 1999, Musk co-founded X.com, an online financial services and e-mail payment company.[64] The startup was one of the first federally insured online banks, and, in its initial months of operation, over 200,000 customers joined the service.[65] The company's investors regarded Musk as inexperienced and replaced him with Intuit CEO Bill Harris by the end of the year.[66] The following year, X.com merged with online bank Confinity to avoid competition.[56][66][67] Founded by Max Levchin and Peter Thiel,[68] Confinity had its own money-transfer service, PayPal, which was more popular than X.com's service.[69]

Within the merged company, Musk returned as CEO. Musk's preference for Microsoft software over Unix created a rift in the company and caused Thiel to resign.[70] Due to resulting technological issues and lack of a cohesive business model, the board ousted Musk and replaced him with Thiel in 2000.[71][b] Under Thiel, the company focused on the PayPal service and was renamed PayPal in 2001.[73][74] In 2002, PayPal was acquired by eBay for $1.5 billion in stock, of which Musk—the largest shareholder with 11.72% of shares—received $175.8 million.[75][76] In 2017, Musk purchased the domain X.com from PayPal for an undisclosed amount, stating that it had sentimental value.[77][78]

SpaceX

In 2001, Musk became involved with the nonprofit Mars Society and discussed funding plans to place a growth-chamber for plants on Mars.[79] Seeking a way to launch the greenhouse payloads into space, Musk made two unsuccessful trips to Moscow to purchase intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) from Russian companies NPO Lavochkin and Kosmotras. Musk instead decided to start a company to build affordable rockets.[80] With $100 million of his early fortune,[81] Musk founded SpaceX in May 2002 and became the company's CEO and Chief Engineer.[82][83]

Musk explains Starship capabilities to leaders of North American Aerospace Defense Command, U.S. Northern Command, and Air Force Space Command in 2019

SpaceX attempted its first launch of the Falcon 1 rocket in 2006.[84] Although the rocket failed to reach Earth orbit, it was awarded a Commercial Orbital Transportation Services program contract from NASA, then led by Mike Griffin.[85][86] After two more failed attempts that nearly caused Musk to go bankrupt,[84] SpaceX succeeded in launching the Falcon 1 into orbit in 2008.[87] Later that year, SpaceX received a $1.6 billion NASA contract for Falcon 9-launched Dragon spacecraft flights to the International Space Station (ISS), replacing the Space Shuttle after its 2011 retirement.[88] In 2012, the Dragon vehicle docked with the ISS, a first for a commercial spacecraft.[89]

Working towards its goal of reusable rockets, in 2015 SpaceX successfully landed the first stage of a Falcon 9 on a land platform.[90] Later landings were achieved on autonomous spaceport drone ships, an ocean-based recovery platform.[91] In 2018, SpaceX launched the Falcon Heavy; the inaugural mission carried Musk's personal Tesla Roadster as a dummy payload.[92][93] Since 2019,[94] SpaceX has been developing Starship, a reusable, super heavy-lift launch vehicle intended to replace the Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy.[95] In 2020, SpaceX launched its first crewed flight, the Demo-2, becoming the first private company to place astronauts into orbit and dock a crewed spacecraft with the ISS.[96] In 2024, NASA awarded SpaceX an $843 million contract to deorbit the ISS at the end of its lifespan.[97]

Starlink

In 2015, SpaceX began development of the Starlink constellation of low Earth orbit satellites to provide satellite Internet access.[98] After the launch of prototype satellites in 2018, the first large constellation was deployed in May 2019.[99] The total cost of the decade-long project to design, build, and deploy the constellation was estimated by SpaceX in 2020 to be $10 billion.[100][c]

50 Starlink satellites shortly before deployment to low Earth orbit, 2019

During the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Musk provided free Starlink service to Ukraine, permitting Internet access and communication at a yearly cost to SpaceX of $400 million.[103][104][105][106][107] However, Musk refused to block Russian state media on Starlink.[108][109] In 2023, Musk denied Ukraine's request to activate Starlink over Crimea to aid an attack against the Russian navy, citing fears of a nuclear response.[110][111][112]

Tesla

Tesla, Inc., originally Tesla Motors, was incorporated in July 2003 by Martin Eberhard and Marc Tarpenning. Both men played active roles in the company's early development prior to Musk's involvement.[113] Musk led the Series A round of investment in February 2004; he invested $6.35 million, became the majority shareholder, and joined Tesla's board of directors as chairman.[114][115] Musk took an active role within the company and oversaw Roadster product design, but was not deeply involved in day-to-day business operations.[116] Following a series of escalating conflicts in 2007, and the financial crisis of 2007–2008, Eberhard was ousted from the firm.[117][118] Musk assumed leadership of the company as CEO and product architect in 2008.[119] A 2009 lawsuit settlement with Eberhard designated Musk as a Tesla co-founder, along with Tarpenning and two others.[120][121] Musk resigned from chairman of the board as part of the settlement of a lawsuit from the SEC over him tweeting that funding had been "secured" for potentially taking Tesla private.[122][123]

Musk next to a Tesla Model S, 2011

Tesla began delivery of the Roadster, an electric sports car, in 2008. With sales of about 2,500 vehicles, it was the first mass production all-electric car to use lithium-ion battery cells.[124] Under Musk, Tesla has since launched several well-selling electric vehicles, including the four-door sedan Model S (2012), the

crossover Model X (2015), the mass-market sedan Model 3 (2017), the crossover Model Y (2020), and the pickup truck Cybertruck (2023).[125][126][127][128][129] The company has also constructed multiple lithium-ion battery and electric vehicle factories, called Gigafactories.[130] Since its initial public offering in 2010,[131] Tesla stock has risen significantly; it became the most valuable carmaker in summer 2020,[132][133] and it entered the S&P 500 later that year.[134][135] In October 2021, it reached a market capitalization of $1 trillion, the sixth company in US history to do so.[136]

SolarCity and Tesla Energy

Musk provided the initial concept and financial capital for SolarCity, which his cousins Lyndon and Peter Rive founded in 2006.[137] By 2013, SolarCity was the second largest provider of solar power systems in the United States.[138] In 2014, Musk promoted the idea of SolarCity building an advanced production facility in Buffalo, New York, triple the size of the largest solar plant in the United States.[139] Construction of the factory started in 2014 and was completed in 2017. It operated as a joint venture with Panasonic until early 2020.[140][141]

SolarCity solar-panel installation vans in 2009

Tesla acquired SolarCity for $2 billion in 2016 and merged it with its battery unit to create Tesla Energy. The deal's announcement resulted in a more than 10% drop in Tesla's stock price; at the time, SolarCity was facing liquidity issues.[142] Multiple shareholder groups filed a lawsuit against Musk and Tesla's directors, stating that the purchase of SolarCity was done solely to benefit Musk and came at the expense of Tesla and its shareholders.[143][144] Tesla directors settled the lawsuit in January 2020, leaving Musk the sole remaining defendant.[145][146] Two years later, the court ruled in Musk's favor.[147]

Neuralink

In 2016, Musk co-founded Neuralink, a neurotechnology startup, with an investment of $100 million.[148][149] Neuralink aims to integrate the human brain with artificial intelligence (AI) by creating devices that are embedded in the brain. Such technology could enhance memory or allow the devices to communicate with software.[149][150] The company also hopes to develop devices to treat neurological conditions like spinal cord injuries.[151] In 2022, Neuralink announced that clinical trials would begin by the end of the year.[152] In September 2023, the Food and Drug Administration approved Neuralink to initiate six-year human trials.[153]

Musk discussing a Neuralink device during a live demonstration in 2020

Neuralink has conducted animal testing on macaques at the University of California, Davis. In 2021, the company released a video in which a Macaque played the video game Pong via a Neuralink implant. The company's animal trials—which have caused the deaths of some monkeys—have led to claims of animal cruelty. The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine has alleged that Neuralink violated the

Animal Welfare Act.[154] Employees have complained that pressure from Musk to accelerate development has led to botched experiments and unnecessary animal deaths. In 2022, a federal probe was launched into possible animal welfare violations by Neuralink.[155]

The Boring Company

Musk during the 2018 inauguration of the Boring test tunnel in Hawthorne, California

In 2017, Musk founded the Boring Company to construct tunnels, and revealed plans for specialized, underground, high-occupancy vehicles that could travel up to 150 miles per hour (240 km/h) and thus circumvent above-ground traffic in major cities.[156][157] Early in 2017, the company began discussions with regulatory bodies and initiated construction of a 30-foot (9.1 m) wide, 50-foot (15 m) long, and 15-foot (4.6 m) deep "test trench" on the premises of SpaceX's offices, as that required no permits.[158] The Los Angeles tunnel, less than two miles (3.2 km) in length, debuted to journalists in 2018. It used Tesla Model Xs and was reported to be a rough ride while traveling at suboptimal speeds.[159] Two tunnel projects announced in 2018, in Chicago and West Los Angeles, have been canceled.[160][161] However, a tunnel beneath the Las Vegas Convention Center was completed in early 2021.[162] Local officials have approved further expansions of the tunnel system.[163]

X corp.

In early 2017, Musk expressed interest in buying Twitter and had questioned the platform's commitment to freedom of speech.[165][166][167] By 2022, Musk had reached 9.2% stake in the company,[168] making him the largest shareholder.[169][d] Musk later agreed to a deal that would appoint him to Twitter's board of directors and prohibit him from acquiring more than 14.9% of the company.[171][172] Days later, Musk made a $43 billion offer to buy Twitter.[169][173] By the end of April Musk had successfully concluded his bid for approximately $44 billion.[174] This included approximately $12.5 billion in loans and $21 billion in equity financing.[175][176] Having back tracked on his initial decision,[177] Musk bought the company on October 27, 2022.[178]

Immediately after the acquisition, Musk fired several top Twitter executives including CEO Parag Agrawal;[178][179] Musk became the CEO instead.[180] Under Elon Musk, Twitter instituted monthly subscription for a "blue check",[181][182][183] and laid off a significant portion of the company's staff.[184][185] Musk lessened content moderation and hate speech also increased on the platform after his takeover.[186][187][188][189] In late 2022, Musk released internal documents relating to Twitter's moderation of Hunter Biden's laptop controversy in the lead-up to the 2020 presidential election.[190] Musk also promised to step down as CEO after a Twitter poll,[191][192] and five months later, Musk stepped down from chief executive officer (CEO) and transitioned his role to executive chairman and chief technology officer (CTO).[193]

Despite Musk stepping down as CEO, X continues to struggle with challenges such as viral misinformation,[194] hate speech, and antisemitism controversies.[195][196] Musk has been accused of trying to silence some of his critics[197] by removing their accounts' blue checkmarks, which hinders visibility and is considered a form of shadow banning,[198][199] or suspending their accounts without justification.[200]

Other activities

Hyperloop

In August 2013, Musk announced plans for a version of a vactrain, and assigned engineers from SpaceX and Tesla to design a transport system between Greater Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area, at an estimated cost of $6 billion.[201][202] Later that year, Musk unveiled the concept, dubbed the Hyperloop,[203] intended to make travel cheaper than any other mode of transport for such long distances.[204]

A tube part of the 2017 Hyperloop pod competition, sponsored by SpaceX

OpenAI and xAI

In December 2015, Musk co-founded OpenAI, a not-for-profit artificial intelligence (AI) research company aiming to develop artificial general intelligence, intended to be safe and beneficial to humanity.[205] Musk pledged $1 billion of funding to the company,[206] but only donated $50 million.[207] In 2018, Musk left the OpenAI board.[208] Since 2018, OpenAI has made significant advances in machine learning.[209] In July 2023, Musk launched the artificial intelligence company xAI, which aims to develop a generative AI program that competes with existing offerings like OpenAI's ChatGPT. Musk obtained funding from investors in SpaceX and Tesla,[210] and xAI hired engineers from Google and OpenAI.[211]

Private jet

Musk uses a private jet owned by Falcon Landing LLC, a SpaceX-linked company, and acquired a second jet in August 2020.[213][214] His heavy use of the jets and the consequent fossil fuel usage have received criticism.[213][215] Musk's flight usage is tracked on social media through ElonJet.[216][217][218] In December 2022, Musk banned the ElonJet account on Twitter, as well as temporary bans on the accounts of journalists that posted stories regarding the incident, including Donie O'Sullivan, Keith Olbermann, and journalists from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, CNN, and *The Intercept*.[219]

Politics

Musk is an outlier among executives who typically avoid partisan political advocacy.[220][221][222] Musk was a registered independent voter when he lived in California.[223] Historically, he has donated to both Democrats and Republicans,[224] many of whom serve in states in which he has a vested interest.[225] Beginning in 2022, his political contributions have mostly supported Republicans, with his first vote for a Republican going to Representative Mayra Flores in the 2022 Texas's 34th congressional district special election.[226][227] In 2024, he started supporting international far-right political parties, activists, and causes,[228] and has shared far-right misinformation[229][230][231] and numerous conspiracy theories.[232][233] As of 2024 his views were generally described as right-wing.[234]

Musk with then-president-elect Donald Trump in November 2024

Musk supported Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012,[235] Hillary Clinton in 2016, Joe Biden in 2020,[236] and Donald Trump in 2024.[237] In the 2020 Democratic Party presidential primaries, Musk endorsed candidate Andrew Yang and expressed support for Yang's proposed universal basic income,[238] and endorsed Kanye West's 2020 presidential campaign.[239] In 2021, Musk publicly expressed opposition to the Build Back Better Act, a $3.5 trillion legislative package endorsed by Joe Biden that ultimately failed to pass due to unanimous opposition from congressional Republicans and several Democrats.[240] In 2022, Musk said he would start supporting Republican Party candidates,[241] and gave over $50 million to Citizens for Sanity, a conservative political action committee.[242] In 2023, he supported Republican Ron DeSantis for the 2024 US presidential election, giving $10 million to his campaign,[242] and hosted DeSantis's campaign announcement on a Twitter Spaces event.[243][244][245] From June 2023 to January 2024, Musk hosted a bipartisan set of X Spaces with Republican and Democratic candidates, including Robert F. Kennedy Jr.,[246] Vivek Ramaswamy,[247] and Dean Phillips.[248]

By early 2024, Musk had become a vocal and financial supporter of Donald Trump.[249] In July 2024, after the attempted assassination of Donald Trump, Musk endorsed him for president.[250][251] During the presidential campaign, Musk joined Trump on stage at a campaign rally,[252] and during the campaign promoted conspiracy theories and falsehoods about Democrats, election fraud[253] and immigration, in support of Trump.[254][255] Musk was the largest individual donor of the 2024 election.[256]

Musk at a 2024 gathering with Trump and other political leaders

Musk's international political actions and comments have come under increasing scrutiny and criticism, especially from the governments and leaders of France, Germany, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom, due to his position in the US government.[257][258][259]

Trump's inauguration

Musk giving a gesture at the second inauguration of Donald Trump before saying "My heart goes out to you. It is thanks to you that the future of civilization is assured."[260][261]

In his speech during the second inauguration of Donald Trump, Musk thumped his right hand over his heart, fingers spread wide, and then extended his right arm out, emphatically, at an upward angle, palm down and fingers together. He then repeated the gesture to the crowd behind him. As he finished the gestures, he said to the crowd, "My heart goes out to you. It is thanks to you that the future of civilization is assured."[260][261][262] The gesture was viewed as a Nazi or Roman salute[e] by some.[263][264][265] Musk derided the claims as politicized.[266][267] In a social media post, he wrote: "The 'everyone is Hitler' attack is sooo tired",[268] but did not explicitly deny the claims.[269] In further response to the events, Musk posted a series of puns about Nazis on Twitter.[270] Various media outlets, including the Associated Press, reported that regardless of what Musk meant, his gesture was widely embraced by right-wing extremists and neo-Nazis.[269][271]

Department of Government Efficiency

The concept of DOGE emerged in a discussion between Musk and Donald Trump, and in August 2024, Trump committed to giving Musk an advisory role, with Musk accepting the offer.[272] In November and December 2024, Musk suggested that the organization could help to cut the U.S. federal budget, consolidate the number of federal agencies,[273][274] and eliminate the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau,[275][276] and that its final stage would be "deleting itself".[277]

In January 2025, the organization was created by executive order, and Musk was designated a "special government employee".[278][279] Musk is leading the organization, although his official role is not clear.[280] In February 2025, Musk was criticized for his treatment of government employees.[281][282][283] Musk has prioritized secrecy within the organization[284] and accused others of violating privacy laws.[278][278]

Views

> **Elon Musk**
> @elonmusk
>
> My commitment to free speech extends even to not banning the account following my plane, even though that is a direct personal safety risk
>
> November 6, 2022[285]

Rejecting the conservative label,[286] Musk has described himself as a political moderate, and his views have become more right-wing over time.[287] His views have been characterized as libertarian and far-right,[288][289] and after his involvement in European politics, they have received criticism from some world leaders.[290]

Within the context of American politics, Musk supported Democratic candidates up until 2022, at which point he voted for a Republican for the first time.[235][241][237] He has stated support for universal basic income,[291] gun rights,[292] freedom of speech,[293] a tax on carbon emissions,[294] and H-1B visas.[295] Musk has expressed concern about issues such as artificial intelligence (AI)[296] and climate change,[297] and has

been a critic of wealth tax,[298] short-selling,[299] government subsidies,[300] and Wikipedia.[301] An immigrant himself, Musk has been accused of being anti-immigration, and regularly blames immigration policies for illegal immigration.[302] He is also a pronatalist who believes population decline is the biggest threat to civilization,[303] and believes in the principles of Christianity.[304][305]

Musk has promoted conspiracy theories, and made controversial statements that have led to accusations of sexism, antisemitism,[306][307] transphobia,[308] disseminating disinformation, and support of white pride.[309][310] While describing himself as a "pro-Semite",[311] his comments regarding George Soros and Jewish communities have been condemned by the Anti-Defamation League and the White House.[312] Isaacson's biography of Musk argued that some of his far-right views were "partially triggered" by the transition of his daughter, Vivian Jenna Wilson.[313][314] Musk was criticized during the COVID-19 pandemic for making unfounded epidemiological claims,[315] defied COVID-19 lockdowns restrictions,[316] and supported the Canada convoy protest against vaccine mandates.[317][318]

International relations

Musk with the President of Israel Isaac Herzog, November 2023

Musk has been critical of Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip during the Israel–Hamas war,[319] praised China's economic and climate goals,[320][321] suggested that Taiwan and China should resolve cross-strait relations,[322][323] and was described as having a close relationship with the Chinese government.[320][321]

In Europe, Musk expressed support for Ukraine in 2022 during the Russian invasion, recommended referendums and peace deals on the annexed Russia-occupied territories,[324][325] and supported the far-right Alternative for Germany in Germany in 2024.[326] Regarding British politics, Musk blamed the 2024 UK riots on mass migration and open borders,[327][328] criticized Prime Minister Starmer for what he described as a "two-tier" policing system,[329][330][331] and was subsequently attacked as being responsible for spreading misinformation and amplifying the far-right.[332] He has also voiced his support for far-right activist Tommy Robinson and pledged electoral support for Reform UK.[333][334]

Legal affairs

In 2018, Musk was sued by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for a tweet stating that funding had been secured for potentially taking Tesla private.[335][f] The securities fraud lawsuit characterized the tweet as false, misleading, and damaging to investors, and sought to bar Musk from serving as CEO of publicly traded companies.[335][339][340] Two days later, Musk settled with the SEC, without admitting or denying the SEC's allegations. As a result, Musk and Tesla were fined $20 million each, and Musk was forced to step down for three years as Tesla chairman but was able to remain as CEO.[341] Shareholders filed a lawsuit over the tweet,[342] and in February 2023, a jury found Musk and Tesla not liable.[343] Musk has stated in interviews that he does not regret posting the tweet that triggered the SEC investigation.[344][345]

In 2019, Musk stated in a tweet that Tesla would build half a million cars that year.[346] The SEC reacted by asking a court to hold him in contempt for violating the terms of the 2018 settlement agreement. A joint agreement between Musk and the SEC eventually clarified the previous agreement details,[347] including a list of topics about which Musk needed preclearance.[348] In 2020, a judge blocked a lawsuit that claimed a tweet by Musk regarding Tesla stock price ("too high imo") violated the agreement.[349][350] Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)-released records showed that the SEC concluded Musk had subsequently violated the agreement twice by tweeting regarding "Tesla's solar roof production volumes and its stock price".[351]

In October 2023, the SEC sued Musk over his refusal to testify a third time in an investigation into whether he violated federal law by purchasing Twitter stock in 2022.[352][353][354] In February 2024, Judge Laurel Beeler ruled that Musk must testify again.[355] In January 2025, the SEC filed a lawsuit against Musk for securities violations related to his purchase of Twitter.[356] In January 2024, Delaware Judge Kathaleen McCormick ruled in a 2018 lawsuit that Musk's $55 billion pay package from Tesla be rescinded.[357] McCormick called the compensation granted by the company's board "an unfathomable sum" that was unfair to shareholders.[358]

Personal life

Musk became a US citizen in 2002.[359] From the early 2000s until late 2020, Musk resided in California, where both Tesla and SpaceX were founded.[360] He then relocated to Starbase, Texas,[361][362] saying that California had become "complacent" about its economic success.[360][363][364]

While hosting *Saturday Night Live* in 2021, Musk stated that he has Asperger syndrome (now merged with autism spectrum disorder), although he has not been medically diagnosed.[365][366] Musk suffers from back pain and has undergone several spine-related surgeries, including a disc replacement.[367][368] In 2000, he contracted a severe case of malaria while on vacation in South Africa.[369] Musk has stated he uses doctor-prescribed ketamine for occasional depression and that he doses "a small amount once every other week or something like that";[370] in January 2024, *The Wall Street Journal* reported he takes ketamine, LSD, cocaine and other drugs recreationally.[371][372][373]

Through his own label Emo G Records, Musk released a rap track, "RIP Harambe", on SoundCloud in March 2019.[374][375][376] The following year, he released an EDM track, "Don't Doubt Ur Vibe", featuring his own lyrics and vocals.[377] Musk plays video games, which he stated has a "'restoring effect' that helps his 'mental calibration'",[378] including *Quake*, *Diablo IV*, *Elden Ring*, and *Polytopia*,[379][380] and has admitted to "account boosting", or cheating by hiring outside services to achieve top player rankings.[381][382]

Relationships and children

Musk has fathered twelve children[1], one of whom died. He had six children with his first wife, Canadian author Justine Wilson, who he met while attending Queen's University in Ontario, Canada; they married in 2000.[383] In 2002, their first child Nevada Musk died of sudden infant death syndrome at the age of 10 weeks.[384] After his death, the couple used in vitro fertilization (IVF) to continue their family;[385] they had twins in 2004, followed by triplets in 2006.[385] The couple divorced in 2008 and have shared

custody of their children.[386][387] The elder twin he had with Wilson came out as a trans woman and, in 2022, officially changed her name to Vivian Jenna Wilson,[388] adopting her mother's surname because she no longer wished to be associated with Musk.[388]

Musk with his son, X Æ A-Xii, in the Oval Office, February 2025

Musk began dating English actress Talulah Riley in 2008.[389] They married two years later at Dornoch Cathedral in Scotland.[390][391] In 2012, the couple divorced, before remarrying the following year.[392] After briefly filing for divorce in 2014,[392] Musk finalized a second divorce from Riley in 2016.[393] Musk then dated Amber Heard for several months in 2017;[394] he had reportedly been "pursuing" her since 2012.[395]

In 2018, Musk and Canadian musician Grimes confirmed they were dating.[396] Grimes and Musk have three children, born in 2020, 2021, and 2023.[397][398][399] Musk and Grimes originally gave their eldest child the name "X Æ A-12", which would have violated California regulations as it contained characters that are not in the modern English alphabet;[400][401] the names registered on the birth certificate are "X" as a first name, "Æ A-Xii" as a middle name, and "Musk" as a last name.[402][403] They received criticism for choosing a name perceived to be impractical and difficult to pronounce;[404] Musk has said the intended pronunciation is "X Ash A Twelve".[403] Their second child was born via surrogacy.[405] Despite the pregnancy, Musk confirmed reports that the couple were "semi-separated" in September 2021; in an interview with *Time* in December 2021, he said he was single.[406][407] In October 2023, Grimes sued Musk over parental rights and custody of X Æ A-Xii.[408][409][410]

Musk also has three children with Shivon Zilis, director of operations and special projects at Neuralink, twins born via IVF in 2021 and a child born in 2024 via surrogacy.[411][412][413][414]

Wealth

Elon Musk is the wealthiest person in the world, with an estimated net worth of US$402 billion as of February 8, 2025, according to the *Bloomberg Billionaires Index*,[415] and $397 billion according to *Forbes*,[416] primarily from his ownership stakes in Tesla, Inc. and SpaceX.[417]

Having been first listed on the *Forbes Billionaires List* in 2012,[418] around 75% of Musk's wealth was derived from Tesla stock in November 2020.[419] Describing himself as "cash poor",[420][421] a year later, he became the first person in the world to have a net worth above $300 billion. By December 2024, he became the first person to reach a net worth of $400 billion.[422]

Musk Foundation

Musk is president of the Musk Foundation he founded in 2001,[423][424] whose stated purpose is to provide solar-power energy systems in disaster areas, with an interest in human space exploration, pediatrics, renewable energy, and "safe artificial intelligence".[425] From 2002 to 2018, the foundation donated nearly half of its $25 million directly to Musk's OpenAI.[426][427] The foundation's assets reached $9.4 billion by the end of 2021.[428]

Public image

Musk (second from left) with Trump (second from right) and President of Argentina Javier Milei (center) in 2024

Although his ventures have been highly influential within their separate industries starting in the 2000s, Musk only became a public figure in the early 2010s. He has been described as an eccentric who makes spontaneous and impactful decisions, while also often making controversial statements, contrary to other billionaires who prefer reclusiveness to protect their businesses. Musk's actions and his expressed views have made him a polarizing figure.[429] Biographer Ashlee Vance described people's opinions of Musk as polarized due to his "part philosopher, part troll" persona on Twitter.[430] Musk has been described as an American oligarch due to his extensive influence over public discourse, social media, industry, politics, and government policy.[431] His influence in the second presidency of Donald Trump led some to call him the "actual president-elect", "shadow president" or "co-president".[432][433]

Accolades

Musk receiving the Order of Defence Merit from the Brazilian Armed Forces in 2022[434]

Awards for his contributions to the development of the Falcon rockets include the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics George Low Transportation Award in 2008,[435] the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale Gold Space Medal in 2010,[436] and the Royal Aeronautical Society Gold Medal in 2012.[437] In 2015, he received an honorary doctorate in engineering and technology from Yale University[438] and an Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Honorary Membership.[439] Musk was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS) in 2018.[440][g] In 2022, Musk was elected to the National Academy of Engineering.[442]

Time has listed Musk as one of the most influential people in the world in 2010,[443] 2013,[444] 2018,[445] and 2021.[446] Musk was selected as *Time*'s "Person of the Year" for 2021. Then *Time* editor-in-chief Edward Felsenthal wrote that, "Person of the Year is a marker of influence, and few individuals have had more influence than Musk on life on Earth, and potentially life off Earth too."[447][448]

In popular culture

Musk was a partial inspiration for the characterization of Tony Stark in the Marvel film *Iron Man* (2008).[449] Musk also had a cameo appearance in the film's 2010 sequel, *Iron Man 2*.[450] Other films that he has made cameos and appearances include *Machete Kills* (2013),[451] *Why Him?* (2016),[452] and *Men in Black: International* (2019).[453] Television series in which he has appeared include *The Simpsons* ("The Musk Who Fell to Earth", 2015),[454] *The Big Bang Theory* ("The Platonic Permutation", 2015),[455] *South Park* ("Members Only", 2016),[456][457] *Young Sheldon* ("A Patch, a Modem, and a Zantac®", 2017),[458] *Rick and Morty* ("One Crew over the Crewcoo's Morty", 2019).[459][460] He contributed interviews to the documentaries *Racing Extinction* (2015) and *Lo and Behold* (2016).[461][462]

Notes

a. Elon's maternal grandfather, Joshua N. Haldeman, who died when Elon was a toddler, was an American-born Canadian who took his family on record-breaking journeys to Africa and Australia in a single-engine AviaBellanca airplane.[9][10][11][12][9] In Canada, Haldeman was a political activist with the Social Credit Party of Canada and the Technocracy movement. After moving to South Africa in 1950, he wrote articles supporting apartheid and far-right conspiracy theories.[13]

b. Musk remained on the board and served as an advisor.[72][73]

c. SpaceX received nearly $900 million in Federal Communications Commission subsidies for Starlink.[101][102]

d. He did not file the necessary SEC paperwork within 10 days of his stake passing 5%, a violation of US securities laws.[170]

e. The "Roman salute" is a gesture which was used by Italian Fascists, then adopted by the Nazis. It is not believed to have been used by ancient Romans.

f. Musk stated he was considering taking Tesla private at a price of $420 a share, an alleged reference to marijuana.[336] Members of Tesla's board and rapper Azealia Banks alleged that Musk may have been under the influence of recreational drugs when he wrote the tweet.[337][338]

g. In 2024, Musk's Royal Society membership was criticized by 74 members over his alleged anti-scientific behavior and promotion of misinformation, prompting debates about the society's standards on membership and leading to the resignation of Dorothy Bishop, a neuropsychologist at the University of Oxford, who cited her dissatisfaction with the Society's response.[441]

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current trajectory, may very well be abandoned by all three. Aristotle says a good ending should be surprising but inevitable. It's possible to imagine multiple finales for Musk that meet these criteria, but the story always begins the same way. Once upon a time in Pretoria, there was a boy who wanted to be a man." (p. 10.)

External links

- Appearances (https://www.c-span.org/person/?1020671) on C-SPAN

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